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SUBJECT: ROK URGES FRENCH ENVOY TO GO SLOW ON DPRK

Classified By: POL M/C James L. Wayman. Reasons 1.4 (b/d).

#### Summary and Comment

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¶1. (C) Summary: ROKG officials urged French Special Envoy for DPRK Issues Jack Lang to exercise caution in moving ahead with North Korea, according to our contacts involved in Lang's visit. MOFAT, French Embassy and EU Mission contacts all characterized the visit to South Korea as a mission focused on "listening." Discussions at the Blue House and with Foreign Minister Yu focused on the issue of whether France should establish diplomatic relations with the DPRK; there was no discussion of a role for France or the EU in the 6PT, according to MOFAT. Lang's ROKG interlocutors all underscored the importance of France insisting on substantive progress toward denuclearization before even considering opening relations with Kim Jong-il's regime. End summary.

¶2. (C) Comment: It appears that LMB agreed to meet with Lang to publicly reassure domestic audiences that he is engaged and leading on the DPRK nuclear issue. Privately, we heard from MOFAT officials that the Blue House was not pleased with the French envoy's visit, in part because Lang was unable to explain clearly France's sudden interest in dealing with Pyongyang. End comment.

#### Limited Mission for French Envoy

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¶3. (C) ROK officials, the French Embassy and the EU Mission here told us that French Special Envoy for DPRK Issues Jack Lang's meetings in Seoul focused primarily on the question of whether France should establish diplomatic relations with the DPRK. French Embassy Deputy Political Counselor Sebastien Jaunet emphasized that Lang's mission as Special Envoy was strictly "exploratory" and not an attempt on the part of France to insert itself into the Six-Party process.

#### EU Ready to Support as Needed

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¶4. (C) EU Mission DCM Uwe Wissenbach separately echoed Jaunet's comments, noting that the EU had always understood that although it might play a role in supporting the Six-Party process in the later stages of implementation of any agreement, it would only seek to get involved if it concluded it had something to offer. John Sagar, the EU Mission Political Advisor, added that the Commission fully understands there is little political support for EU involvement in the negotiating process.

French Role in Nuke Issue Not on Table

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15. (C) MOFAT Director for Inter-Korean Policy Park Ji-eun told us that in his meetings with ROK officials, Lang also briefly raised the issues of human rights, the DPRK leadership succession, and LMB's Grand Bargain proposal. Park emphasized that there was no discussion of French or EU interest in joining the Six-Party Talks or of specific dates for a Lang visit to Pyongyang. Lang separately told reporters he was considering going to North Korea in the November 7-8 timeframe.

Timing Not Right for Relations with DPRK  
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16. (C) Park emphasized that ROKG interlocutors uniformly told Lang that establishing diplomatic ties with the North now would send "the wrong message" and all, FM Yu foremost among them, had urged caution. The common message was that economic cooperation and diplomatic relations would be appropriate only after the North made substantive progress toward denuclearization. Moreover, Lang's interlocutors recommended that Paris look for signs of strategic changes in policy from Pyongyang as a prerequisite for closer relations with the North. Lang was warned that Pyongyang was masterful at making a grand show of minor tactical changes in hopes of winning aid and support from the outside world. Park expressed confidence that Lang "fully appreciated" Seoul's concerns. She noted that Lang planned to attend the Busan Film Festival October 9-10 before returning to France on October 11.  
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